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LIBRARY COLUMN

BIG Read features Latina author

**By Tammy Wilson
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NEWTON—*How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez is this year's BIG Read selection.

The coming-of-age story explores how four sisters from the Dominican Republic adjust, or fail to adjust, to American culture. The book, which should spark discussion of the immigrant experience, particularly by those from the Caribbean, will culminate with an author appearance on April 16 at Lenoir-Rhyne University.



Alvarez is considered one of the most influential Latina writers of our time. Though born in New York, she was reared until age 10 in the Dominican Republic, where her father practiced medicine and eventually became involved in a plot to overthrow the military dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina. Dr. Alvarez's plans were discovered, however and the family managed to escape the Dominican Republic before he was arrested.

A writer of many talents, Julia Alvarez has published novels as well as poetry and essays. And she also writes for children. Her 2001 best-seller, *How Tia Lola Came to Visit/ Stay*, will be the Little Read for the county's fourth graders.

Both BIG and Little Reads are county-wide literacy programs designed to encourage discussion of books that inspire. Initiated in 2007, BIG Read has fostered the one-book/one-community program for adults. This year's lead agency is Lenoir-Rhyne. Other partners include Catawba County Library System, Hickory Public Library System and Catawba Valley Community College.

Multiple copies of Alvarez's books are available at the library. Her other titles include *In the Time of the Butterflies*, which explores ruinous life under the cruel dictator Trujillo. A similar treatise for younger readers is *Before We Were Free*, and *Return to Sender*, about Mexican workers in Vermont.

For preschoolers, Alvarez wrote *A Gift of Gracias*, a tale of a girl whose family almost has to leave an island community.

An adult book, *Once Upon a Quincenera*, has been described as the skillful blending of memoir and social science to explore the fanfare surrounding the coming-of-age rite for 15-year-old Latinas. *In the Name of Salome*, explores 100 years in the lives of two heroic women of the Caribbean.

To check availability of these or other works by Julia Alvarez, check with any branch of Catawba County Library or log on to <http://www.catawbacountync.gov/library>



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